

Community Environmental Advisory Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

September 23, 2021 - 5:00 pm

Online Meeting

Members present: Indigo Davitt-Liu, Mark Dhennin, Tess Dornfeld, Lauren Fleming, Divine Islam, LesLee Jackson, Anna Johnson, Erin Niehoff, and Jaqueline Zepeda (Quorum: 8)

Members not present: Max Dalton, Matthew Douglas-May, Sandy Fazeli, Toya Lopez, Barbara Lunde, Nicholas Minderman

Staff: Kim Havey, Julia Evelyn

Guests and Presenters: Kjersti Monson, Meron Demissie, Colleen O'Connor Toberman, Mark Andrew, and Amanda Wigen

Call To Order

Roll Call.

Adoption of the agenda.

- Tess Dornfeld would like to discuss CEAC getting organized to attend in person community events, and follow up on an MOU for a bike/scooter share program if there is time, or put it on a future agenda.

Acceptance of minutes.

- [Aug 18, 2021 Community Environmental Advisory Commission](#)

Anna Johnson makes motion to accept August minutes and adopt agenda with the above additions. Lauren Fleming seconds. Motion passed.

Land Acknowledgement

As we meet here today, we are reminded that Minneapolis is situated on the homelands of the Dakota people. An area that is steeped in rich Indigenous history, it is home to Indigenous people from more than 30 different nations. As a City, we have a responsibility to care for the land on which we live and work and all its natural surroundings. This stewardship is an integral part of our involvement in this commission, and we honor it as we begin our meeting. We now open this space to discuss ways in which we can support Indigenous people in our community.

- MN Indian Women's Resource Center is organizing a [boarding school victims and survivors march](#) on Friday 9/24 at 1pm.
- Following the missing persons case of Gabby Petito, we should remember the many missing and murdered Indigenous women whose cases don't get the same amount of attention.

Presentation

The sale and future use of the St. Anthony Falls Dam and related Infrastructure – Mark Andrew and Amanda Wigen

[Friends of the Falls 2021 09 14 CEAC Presentation](#)

Colleen O'Connor Toberman with Friends of the Mississippi River presented on activities on and around the Mississippi related to locks and dams. Learn more at www.fmr.org/MetroDams. Reach out with questions or comments to CToberman@fmr.org.

Mark Andrew and Kjersti Monson from Friends of the Falls gave the second portion of the presentation about the future of the locks and dams. Questions and comments can be directed to Mark@thefalls.org and Jeffrey.Johnson@minneapolismn.gov.

Discussion

Q (from chat): what would this mean for asian carp? I know the locks were closed to prevent the spread of carp up the Mississippi River, so I'm wondering whether that's still a consideration.

- From chat: here are some articles about the latest with invasive carp:
<https://fmr.org/tags/invasive-carp>
- Invasive Asian carp are creeping up the Mississippi and they are incredibly invasive. Currently they have only reached as far north as southern MN. If they get farther upstream and into tributaries they will cause a lot of serious ecosystem destruction. The reason for closing Upper St. Anthony was to prevent them from making it into the headwaters area of the state because this lock is taller than the others so it can block the carp that the other locks cannot. Removing Lower St. Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 1 would not affect carp spread because those structures do not stop the carp anyway. One other lock and dam in southern MN has potential to be a good barrier. We hope they'll never make it to downtown Minneapolis.

Q: Is there an option for you to purchase the property from the Army Corps? Also, what is going to happen to the flow of the water to prevent flooding?

- The Army Corps will likely give that land around the upper lock away, they would like to get it off their hands. It's such a huge responsibility and hard to imagine anyone being more suitable than the federal government to ensure that such infrastructure stays in good condition and operated safely with a regional perspective. The lower lock has an adjacent piece of land that Friends of the Falls would like to pursue to bring more local control to the riverfront.
- Upper lock does manage flood control, but the downstream locks don't have much impact on flooding. The upper lock is sufficient to manage the water flow.

Q (from chat): if dam removal were the outcome of the ACE disposition study, would it be ACE that would undertake that?

- The Army Corps could conduct that work, or it could be bought and removed by another organization like American Rivers.

Thank you for presentation, and appreciate the involvement of the tribes. What do you see as biggest risks in this process for the developers interest to supersede those of the tribes? And how can this be prevented?

- We've developed and emphasized an understanding of the benefits of partnership in this work. Our team has a wealth of knowledge on how to navigate disagreements and turbulence.

Q (from chat): If the dams were removed, what would be the downstream impact caused by erosion of accumulated sediments, and the release of contaminants/nutrients/organic materials in the sediments?

- The Mississippi does carry a lot of sediment including from agriculture runoff, and lots of sediment can be bad for the river. Currently the Army Corps dredges the river to downtown St. Paul to keep it navigable. There is currently no dredging needed above the locks and dams (e.g. near Upper Harbor Terminal). There is a lot of sediment being held by the Upper S. Anthony Falls lock and dam which is another reason to keep that lock and dam in place.

Q: I'm skeptical about management of the sediment build up and the management of the land near the river. Is there going to be an environmental review done about the locks and dams?

- The Army Corps' process does include environmental review. We haven't studied it yet because we haven't done anything like this before. But we do agree that studying the impacts of removal thoroughly, in particular removing toxic sediment, is critical. For anything as major as dam removal, they would be required to do an Environmental Impact Statement.

Q (from chat): How do any of your plans impact the MPRB plans for the river?

- Friends of the Mississippi River and Friends of the Falls are working closely with the Park Board to look at potential futures for the river whether it stays dammed or not.

What is the ask of the City? Are you looking for a letter or support or just sharing information?

- Working very closely as a partner with the City. The first ask of the City is that the City accepts the conveyance of the federal government to bring the project under local control. Also asking support in centering native voices in the work.

If the city were to take on ownership for the dam and locks, would the city also be taking on liability for potential failures of the infrastructure? Has this been evaluated?

- This has been evaluated, and the City's position is that it could never take on all of that financial risk. It also doesn't make sense to have only one organization or entity responsible for all of the operation and risks of the lock and dam, because they could make decisions that would affect millions downstream. The City has always said it doesn't manage locks.

Do you have a sense of whether any of the tribal nations have an initial position on dam removal?

- It has not come up in conversations with tribal nations but will hopefully be discussed in the future. Tribes will also play a role in this process by directly engaging with the decision making entity, the Army Corps.

In the future, CEAC members would like to be made aware of the studies and work going on related to the locks and dams, and would like to submit comments to City Council for the Army Corps when that becomes available. Keep this on City Council's radar and let them know how they can play a role.

Discussion

Comments are being taken now through October 15th on the [100% Renewable Electricity Community wide](#) by 2030 Blueprint (100RE).

There are a few specific goals for how to obtain 100RE by 2030

- 60% from the renewable energy grid, aligning with Xcel Energy's plan but not including nuclear power which the City does not consider renewable
- 10% from utility based grid programs like Renewable Connect
- 30% locally based solar (rooftop, solar gardens, etc.)

Also includes recommendations for grid system including accelerating amount of solar energy with battery storage in utility plan to start earlier, more freedom in accessing distribution grid.

Looking for feedback today as well as a letter of support for the goals in the blueprint.

Discussion

CEAC appreciates the work the City has done and the increased focus on energy efficiency.

Since energy savings are tracked annually, the City should acknowledge that in the plan to be transparent and avoid greenwashing claims, and address energy storage.

City did not include storage because it doesn't technically "produce" 100RE, but there have been multiple comments on it so it should be acknowledged.

City would like comments by Oct 15th. Chair Niehoff suggests creating a document that CEAC members can add to, which would be shared with Director Havey and which the Chair would develop into an official comment letter to be approved at the next CEAC meeting in October. CEAC members agree with this plan.

Is there a plan to increase the number of City buildings with solar panels over time?

- These are large buildings. We are putting a 700kW capacity solar garden on one building, and working with US Solar. We're looking to ramp up the number of buildings with solar through programs like virtual net metering.

Will there be City incentives for residents to put solar panels on their homes?

- City hopes to be able to offer ways of accessing renewable energy to reduce energy burden for those who need it. It's not the first thing we doing but it is a goal for the future.

City aiming to get to 100% of the City enterprise powered by local/regional renewable energy.

Unfinished Business

Update on Roof Depot, UHT AUAR letter and CEAC membership

City staff have done a fiscal analysis of different options for the Roof Depot site and a Racial Equity Impact Analysis, which was presented to Council on September 22nd. There was a motion made by CM Reich to move forward with a combined expansion plan, with about 3-3.5 acres of the 7 acre site planned for selling/community development. The motion passed, with CM Ellison being the swing vote. This may include tearing down part of or the entire building. There is a final Council vote on September 24th on the project so it isn't final yet.

CEAC will continue to keep aware of Roof Depot updates. An EAW was accepted by the Council for the old plan, and CEAC should also push for a new environmental review to evaluate the impacts of the new plan.

Recently the EQB just supported an addition to the EAW, so this could be one of the first projects to go through that review process with the additional evaluation of project impacts to GHGs. This is also relevant to the AUAR for Upper Harbor Terminal.

Regarding the UHT AUAR comment letter sent on September 9th, Chair Niehoff has only gotten a response from CM Johnson's aide to say they are reviewing the concerns. Other CEAC members have gotten responses from their CMs. Even though the AUAR has already been voted on, the new EAW climate considerations were just included in that review process and it's frustrating that they decided not to acknowledge this.

Director Havey gives an update on new CEAC membership. There are 4 prospective new members who Director Havey reached out to and will share with Chair Niehoff and the Council. This decision was based on the Sustainability Division's capacity to go through the process. All the seats will open next year, this term is only through 2022. CEAC members expressed excitement to have new points of view joining the commission.

Opportunities for engagement: Chair Niehoff will send out follow up email to gauge interest in tabling at Open Streets.

Announcements

Updates and Announcements from Commissioners and staff:

- The City Council approved a contract with Sundial Solar to install solar PV on the rooftops of at least 11 city buildings for a total production of 5.1 million kWh and to begin negotiations with

US Solar for up to 80 million kWhs of solar. Combined these would cover 100% of the city enterprise's electricity demand.

- The Time of Rent (TOR) energy disclosure program began for all residential apartments in buildings with 5 or more units. The information will help renters know their average energy costs they are responsible for prior to signing a lease. We hope this information will also encourage property owners to make energy efficiency upgrades in order to stay competitive with out rental properties.
- CenterPoint Energy and the City of Minneapolis jointly filed a petition for a Tariff on bill/inclusive financing pilot program on September 1st. Comments are now being taken through January 14th, 2022. Subscribe to receive email notification when new documents are filed in this docket at <https://mn.gov/puc/edockets/>. Docket Number: G-008/M-21-377
- Please complete the American Rescue Plan Act Spending Survey by September 24th and vote for climate action.
- A small group of CEAC members will be meeting to discuss science-based climate goals. The two-two-hour meetings are being scheduled for late September and early October.

Possible Future CEAC Meeting Topics:

- Setting science-based Climate Goals
- Lyft scooters, bikes and mobility hubs
- Metro Transit EV bus purchases
- Plastics / plastic bags
- Open MOU on bike / scooter share

Adjournment

Notice:

Members of the Board may participate remotely by telephone or other electronic means due to the local public health emergency (novel coronavirus pandemic) declared on March 16, 2020, pursuant to the provisions of MN Statutes Section 13D.021. A portion of this meeting may be closed to the public pursuant to MN Statutes Section 13D.03 or 13D.05.

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Next Community Environmental Advisory Commission meeting : Oct 20, 2021

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- Your attendance at the meeting;
- Your name, residential address, email or phone number, or other personal contact details;

- Your comments at the meeting, whether part of a formal hearing or comment period or otherwise; and
- Any submissions you provide before or after the meeting which are included as part of the public record of the meeting.

A portion of this meeting may be closed to the public pursuant to MN Statutes Section 13D.03 or 13D.05.

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